

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 310834
ORIGIN ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 SSO-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SAB-01 L-03
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APPROVED BY ARA/PAN:EJNADEAU
S MR. PASSAGE
S/S - MR. REDDY

-----241534Z 119641 /42
O 241515Z DEC 76
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PN

SUBJECT: PRESS GUIDANCE

1. DEPARTMENT IS USING THE FOLLOWING GUIDANCE IN
RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS ON THE GOP RELEASE OF THE TORRIJOS
LETTER:

QUESTION: YOU PROMISED TO LOOK INTO THE RELEASE EARLIER
TODAY OF A LETTER FROM GENERAL TORRIJOS OF PANAMA TO
SECRETARY KISSINGER. HAVE YOU ANY COMMENT?

ANSWER: WHILE WE REGRET THAT THE PANAMANIAN EMBASSY HAS
RELEASED THIS DOCUMENT, IT IS CORRECT THAT WE HAVE
DISCUSSED THE BOMBINGS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERN-
MENT OF PANAMA AND WE UNDERSTAND THAT PANAMA HAS INVES-
TIGATED THE MATTER. I DO NOT INTEND TO COMMENT ON THE
DETAILS OF THE LETTER EXCEPT TO SAY THAT WE HAVE TAKEN
NOTE OF PANAMA'S-RESPONSE AND, IN PARTICULAR, ITS INTEREST
IN THE CANAL'S SECURITY AND SMOOTH OPERATION.

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WE CONTINUE TO THINK THAT THE LEGITIMATE INTERESTS OF BOTH
COUNTRIES WOULD BEST BE SERVED BY A NEW TREATY. IN THIS
REGARD YOU WILL NOTE THAT AMBASSADOR BUNKER RETURNED LAST
WEEKEND FROM HIS MOST RECENT SERIES OF DISCUSSIONS WITH
PANAMA'S NEGOTIATORS. AT THE CONCLUSION OF THOSE TALKS
THE TWO TEAMS ISSUED A JOINT STATEMENT NOTING THAT FURTHER

PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE AND THAT THE REPRESENTATIVES OF BOTH COUNTRIES ADDRESSED THE ISSUES CAREFULLY, AT A DELIBERATE PACE AND WITH RESPECT TO EACH OTHERS' CONCERNS. OBVIOUSLY, I CAN'T PREDICT WHEN WE MAY HAVE A NEW TREATY FULLY NEGOTIATED.

QUESTION: THE TORRIJOS LETTER COMMENTS ABOUT CERTAIN PROOF WHICH THE USG POSSESSES CONCERNING THESE BOMBINGS. CAN YOU TELL US ANYTHING ABOUT THIS PROOF?

ANSWER: WE DO NOT WISH TO EXACERBATE THE SITUATION. THE PRIMARY PROBLEM IS TO SECURE OUR FUNDAMENTAL INTERESTS IN THE CANAL NOW AND IN THE FUTURE, AND TO RECONCILE THEM WITH PANAMA'S LEGITIMATE ASPIRATIONS. WE HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED THIS TO BE POSSIBLE.
KISSINGER

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